SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE

FOR IDEAS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD.

Rubric, FAQs, & Application Guide

GRADUATE SCHOOL

INNOVATION HUB
TEXAS TECH

This guide includes a Rubric, FAQs, examples of social ventures, tips for strong applications, and example applications to be used as a guide for applicants. Additional questions may be directed to **Taysha Williams, Managing Director,** via email at taysha.williams@ttu.edu.

FAQs

Who can apply for the Social Entrepreneurship Challenge?
All undergraduate and graduate students within the Texas Tech University System are eligible to apply. You don't need a formal business or organization, just a bold idea that addresses a social, community, or environmental problem and a plan to make it happen.

Please note: Applications are evaluated based on the viability, scalability, and impact of the proposed venture. Funding is awarded only if submissions meet the vision and standards of the program.

Do I need to have a registered company or nonprofit to apply?
Nope! You do not need to be registered as a business or nonprofit to participate. We're looking for students who have a clear idea, a mission for social good, and a realistic plan to bring their vision to life.

What kinds of ideas are considered "social entrepreneurship"?
Unlike traditional entrepreneurs focused solely on financial gain, social entrepreneurs blend business with purpose. Their mission? To tackle pressing issues like poverty, education gaps, health care disparities, and environmental challenges while running a successful business. These innovators see problems as opportunities, using creative solutions to drive real, lasting impact.

From ethical fashion brands that empower artisans to tech startups bringing clean water to remote villages, social entrepreneurs are proving that business can be both profitable and purposeful. They don't just dream of change, they build it. (*U.S. Chamber of Commerce*)

How much funding can I win?
Participants compete for award amounts and Innovation Hub memberships in the following increments:

- **First Place:** $3,000 grant plus a one-year Innovation Hub membership (valued at $1,000)
- **Second Place:** $2,000 grant plus a one-year Innovation Hub membership (valued at $1,000)
- **Third Place:** $1,500 grant plus a one-year Innovation Hub membership (valued at $1,000)

Do I need to have a team to apply?
No, you can apply as an individual or part of a team. However, collaboration is encouraged, especially if your idea spans multiple disciplines or requires different skill sets.

Do I have to be a part of another Innovation Hub program?
Not required, but participation in programs like Red Raider Startup, I-Corps, or JumpStart Microgrants strengthens your application and shows commitment.

How long does the Challenge last?
The program spans about six month from the award announcement.

When will I know if I'm selected as a finalist for the Social Entrepreneurship Challenge?
Finalists will be notified after the review period concludes, typically within 2-3 weeks of the application deadlines.

Will I receive mentorship or resources if I am selected?
Yes, awardees will gain access to the Innovation Hub mentors, workshops, and resources to help strengthen their ventures and prepare for launching their ventures.

Can I apply more than once?
Yes, you may reapply in future cycles if your project evolves or if you'd like to compete again with a refined idea.

Tips for Strong Applications

Section I. About You
What reviewers want to see: authenticity, teamwork, and purpose.

- Introduce yourself and your field of study clearly. Your discipline doesn't need to match your idea, in fact, interdisciplinary thinking is encouraged!
- If you have a team, briefly note each person's role (e.g., "Marketing lead," "Prototype designer"). Clear roles show organization.
- Be genuine about *why you care* about the problem. Reviewers are drawn to personal motivation and lived experience as it helps demonstrate long-term commitment.

Section II. Problem & Beneficiaries
What reviewers want to see: understanding of the real issue and who it affects.

- Clearly define the social or environmental problem you're tackling. Avoid vague language like "inequality" or "climate change", instead focus on a specific aspect (e.g., "food waste among Lubbock restaurants").
- Describe your beneficiaries in human terms. Who are they? Where are they? What challenge do they face daily that your solution improves?
- Support your description with data, quotes, or early feedback if you have it.

Section III. Value Proposition
What reviewers want to see: innovation and social value.

- State your solution in one sentence first, then explain how it works.
- Clarify the social value. What positive change or transformation happens because of your solution?
- What is unique about your solution that doesn't already exist?
- Be specific about impact (e.g., "reduces waste by 40%," "creates 5 new jobs for local women," "provides clear water for 200 families").
- Reviewers love when ideas link to measurable outcomes and factual data (do your research!).

Section IV. Customers & Stakeholders
What reviewers want to see: realism about who supports your work.

- Distinguish between beneficiaries (those who benefit) and customers or funders (those who pay or provide resources).
- Identify key stakeholders—partners, schools, nonprofits, or local agencies—who could support or amplify your idea.
- Hint: even mentioning potential partners shows initiative.

Section V. Channels & Relationships
What reviewers want to see: awareness of how to reach people.

- Explain *how* you'll connect with both beneficiaries and supporters (events, online tools, social media, workshops, partnerships, etc.).
- Consider what methods build trust… local collaborations, consistent communication, or transparency about your mission.
- Strong entries include early outreach plans (e.g., "We'll start by running a pilot with 20 students in fall 2025").

Section VI. Resources & Partners
What reviewers want to see: practicality and preparedness.

- List the tangible and intangible resources you need (skills, materials, facilities, software, funding, etc.).
- Identify current or potential partners. These could include campus departments, nonprofits, or industry connections.
- Bonus: mention if you've already contacted or collaborated with any of them—it demonstrates initiative.

Section VII. Activities
What reviewers want to see: a roadmap.

- Outline your main steps to make the idea work—research, prototyping, testing, marketing, etc.
- Show logical flow: each activity should build toward your final outcome or impact.
- Keep it concise but actionable (think: "Month 1 – Survey target users; Month 2 – Build prototype").

Section VIII. Revenue
What reviewers want to see: sustainability.

- Even social ventures need a way to sustain themselves. Explain how you'll keep funding your impact (sales, grants, donations, sponsorships, partnerships, etc.).
- Don't worry if it's not profit-driven—focus on how your model supports continued operation and impact.

Section IX. Impact & Success
What reviewers want to see: measurable change and long-term thinking.

- Define how you'll measure impact—quantitative (e.g., people served, waste reduced) or qualitative (e.g., improved wellbeing, confidence, or awareness).
- Show your five-year vision: what does success look like if everything goes right?
- Strong applications link success back to the original problem—what's different in the world because of your venture?

Section X. Stage of Development
What reviewers want to see: self-awareness and honesty.

- Choose the stage that best matches your progress. It's okay to be early-stage—clarity is more important than exaggeration.
- Reviewers assess feasibility differently depending on your stage, so choose accurately.

Section XI. Next Steps & Interest
What reviewers want to see: growth mindset and engagement.

- Indicate your interest in further opportunities like the Accelerator, Incubator, or Graduate Certificate.
- This shows reviewers you see this challenge as the start of your journey, not the end.
- You can check "Maybe" if you're exploring—just explain your curiosity or goals briefly.